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The Church and Social Service

Contributions to this Department will include material of three kinds: (1) original discussion, suggestion, plans, programs, and theories; (2) reports of special projects, working programs, conferences and meetings, and progress in any distinctive aspect of the field; (3) special results of study and research.

SOCIAL WORK OF THE FEDERAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

WORTH TIPPY

THE position of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America needs to be better understood. The Council is an official coördinating agency for thirty-one Protestant communions, including all the large ones except the Southern Baptist Convention. The Protestant Episcopal Church is related through the Commission on the Church and Social Service. None of the decisions of the Council are binding upon the constituent bodies unless passed upon by their proper authorities. These thirty-one affiliated denominations have a total of 20,052,781 members, 143,367 churches, 113,002 ministers, and a constituency possibly three times as large. This constituency consists of children and people brought up in the Protestant faith but not actual members. For multitudes of them, however, the church has little significance.

The commissions of the Federal Council, which are its working organizations, are related correspondingly to the commissions or departments of the churches responsible for the interests within the scope of the several commissions of the Council. The Council's commissions are controlled by the representatives of the affiliated churches, although the Council itself and its commissions have important powers of initiative. Speaking strictly, however, the commissions of the Council are examples of fellowship work.

The scope of the Commission on Social Service includes the social work and community relations of urban churches and local federations of churches; the church and industry; the relation of the churches to national social agencies and movements and to corresponding departments and bureaus of the Federal Government; research within these fields, publication of the Information Service and the Book Review Serv-

ice, and joint production of social literature, including study courses, pamphlets and books; co-operation in social action with Canadian and European churches, and in America with Catholic, Hebrew and other religious bodies.

The Federal Council is primarily what its name indicates—a Council of the churches represented, its actions going back through the denominational boards and agencies insofar as they elect to carry them out. This is its great power, that back of it is the highly developed organization of these denominations. But more and more the churches are doing certain common things through the Council, as for example, common research, educational production and publication, the organization of state and local federations of churches, the direction of the campaign against war, inter-racial coöperation, and industrial conferences. This sphere a united action will inevitably enlarge as time goes by.

It should be said also, that the churches represented in the Council have other important agencies of coöperation in specialized fields, the most important of which are: The Home Missions Council, The Council of Women for Home Missions, the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, the Committee on Coöperation in Latin-America. The reader should also keep in mind that inter-church coöperation is as yet in its formative stages, that the denominations, rather than their coöperative agencies, constitute the really powerful organizations, and that they naturally and necessarily guard their autonomy.

The Commission on the Church and Social Service has progressively developed and defined its program during the last ten years. It is not as yet completely or finally outlined, if indeed it will ever be, considering that social thinking

and organization are always advancing. But the development of the Protestant churches' social program has been especially difficult because they have had to pass over from the extreme individualism and sharp separation of religion from the rest of life, of the nineteenth century, both deeply grounded in popular belief and prejudice, into the social ideal of the Kingdom of God.

It has been a long and arduous task of practical thinking and social education, involved in continuous controversy. It is not long since a high ecclesiastic thanked God that he had never read a book on sociology. Millions of church folk still think of the high and noble field of social service in terms of church socials and soup kitchens. The significance and persistence of the individualistic concept is shown by the strength of the so-called Fundamentalist Movement at the present time. It is not to be wondered at that the churches have taken their place slowly in the battle lines of the modern struggle for human life, and that their leaders in the fields of social action have had to find their way. The Commission is even now clarifying its function in relation to industry, and doing it not only by careful thinking, but by difficult practical experimentation.

Speaking definitely and concretely, the work of the Commission is proceeding on certain clearly defined lines, which answer the question as to its purposes and idealism.

The Commission recognizes in the first place, that the supreme mission of the church is to teach religion to the people of the nation, with especial emphasis upon the Christian nurture of childhood and youth. The function of the Commission is to help to socialize that teaching; that is, to give it the ideal of the Kingdom of God, to lead it to see life steadily as a whole, with religion as its spiritual leaven, and to recognize that the churches are vitally interested in everything that concerns human welfare. If the churches then do their work rightly they will finally send into society a continuous stream of socially minded young people, who will powerfully influence the thinking and action of the adult mind of the nation.

To that end, the Research Department has been organized and coöperatively financed by the departments of Social Service of the denominations. Its functions are to assemble dependable

fact material for the use of the churches in their educational work, and when necessary to make original social studies; to distribute these to pastors, teachers, the church press and the laity, through a bi-weekly Information Service, a monthly Book Review Service, pamphlets, books, pastoral letters and other forms of publicity; to prepare study courses on social questions for the Sunday School curriculum and for special study groups. This work is now well advanced.

The industrial program of the Commission is now fairly well defined. Speaking broadly it is: to bear the Christian spirit of fairness and good will; to indoctrinate industry with Christian principles; to give it Christian leadership; to point out the evils of industry and their harmful effects upon human life, and to work progressively for a Christian economic order. The Commission stands definitely for the democratic method in accomplishing these results; that is, for the working together of individuals, groups and classes to bring in the better social order, as distinguished from the method of the class struggle. It recognizes that there is a class struggle and that it may become inevitable, but that it is a form of warfare which the church cannot teach. If the church and other constructive social agencies can do their work powerfully enough, it will cease to be necessary, at least in its violent forms.

The third great field of the Churches, and therefore of the Commission, is in community relations. Its policy here is threefold. First, it seeks to make of each local church a highly socialized unit in its teaching, spirit, organization, and neighborhood relations. It would make of every church a highly developed neighborhood center, open every day in the week, and provided with a modern parish or community house. Especially would it do this in industrial neighborhoods. Churches in such neighborhoods should be a combination of worship, religious education and social settlement.

In the second place, the policy of the Federal Council is to bind these local churches together into closely knit community federations of churches, and to relate these federations naturally and functionally to the entire social movement of the community, especially with its social agencies. The Commission believes that every strong church should have a vocationally trained social worker on its staff, and that it should do

social and spiritual case work together, but in strictest coöperation with the central agencies of charity organization and relief.

As to the new movement of community organization and the extension and development of democratic institutions, the Commission is deeply interested. It holds to the historic Protestant attitude of coöperation with public institutions and devotion to the public welfare. It believes in coördination by public authorities wherever it is scientific and divorced from the inefficiency of political control. It seeks to exert its influence to develop the public service. It recognizes the need of added common interests which can bind all citizens together. It can be expected to coöperate with and to exert its influence in behalf of such notable experiments in community organization as is being worked out in North Carolina. It would be unfriendly to an experiment only if the church were excluded, or ignored, or over-ridden, or if fullest use were not made of the service which it has to offer.

In the field of national social movements, the Commission officially represents the contacts with the Protestant group, except that each denomination is free to act for itself if it wishes to do so. But in practice the Commission is the liaison organization. It is in frequent conferences with national agencies and with departments of the Federal Government on social legislation, child welfare, public health, social hygiene, prisons and delinquents, industrial disputes and other forms of social action. The Commission is now organizing a Department of Child Welfare, and a Department of Delinquents; the former to help to standardize the child caring institutions of the churches; the second to deal with jails, prisons and the prevention of delinquency.

As to other religious bodies, the Commission stands positively for brotherhood and coöperation. It believes that religion should be a binding force in society and not divisive as at present. Acting on this principle, it secured coöperation with the National Catholic Welfare Council and the Hebrew Board of Welfare for the Army and Navy during the War, and at present has significant and effective coöperation with the Department of Social Action of the National Catholic Welfare Council and the Central Conference of Rabbis. The Commission is pro-

moting the same kind of coöperation in communities.

In brief, the point of view of the Commission on Social Service is that religion is essentially the struggle for human life in its widest implications. It seeks to give the churches that point of view, and finally to exert every ounce of their influence in the struggle.

THE CHURCH-BY-THE-SIDE-OF-THE-ROAD

A. W. McALISTER

THE CHURCH-BY-THE-Side-of-the-Road is located in the suburbs of Greensboro, N. C. It lies almost adjacent to and midway between Fisher Park on the north and Irving Park on the south, the two best residential sections of the City, whereas to the east and west are settlements composed of less pretentious residences. These elements meet in the Church-by-the-Side-of-the-Road in an atmosphere of friendliness, helpfulness and absolute equality. The standard of precedence in the Church is not wealth nor so-called social position, but character and service and these alone. That spirit of democracy and real brotherhood prevails upon which the Founder of our religion placed such great emphasis in his teaching and practice.

It is not an institutional church. It is like any other church. It is just an ordinary church, with a definite community service program. The church building is not much of a building, but it is comfortable and is so arranged that it can be transformed into about a dozen class rooms for the Sunday School. There are two other buildings in the plant, the Hut of the Men's Club and the Young People's Hut. They are not much for looks, having cost only a few hundred dollars each, and having been built largely by the men and boys of the church, but they are comfortable. There was the usual temptation in the outset to put everything into an imposing church building, but it was wisely decided that this could come later and that there were other things of greater importance. The initial step, when the church was reorganized on its present basis two and a half years ago, was the purchase of a four acre lot, 300 by 600 feet, a double block fronting on four streets. This lot cost \$25,000.00. The border is planted with Regel's privet hedge.